

Summary of Public Comments and Response to Comments for the Draft Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Regional Master Plan



The public comment period for the Draft NLMC Regional Master Plan was May 15 through June 12, 2018. Two public open-house-style meetings were held with 53 persons signing the register in Sturgeon Bay and only two at the Peshtigo meeting.

At the close of the public comment period, 17 persons wrote out comment forms or handed in letters at the meetings, and 72 additional persons and organizations sent in emails and letters. Two petitions were also received. One with 78 signatures of residents and business owners was in support of the regional master plan, particularly the proposed horse trails in Newport and Peninsula. The other was from the Door County Historical Society regarding redevelopments at the Eagle Bluff Light Station. It has 1,370 signatures.

All the public comments focused specifically on the state parks. No written comments were received on the wildlife and fishery areas or other non-park property plans in the region.

As for the comments on the Door County parks, most focused on Peninsula, Potawatomi and Whitefish Dunes. Here is a summary of the primary points:

Peninsula State Park

- A majority of comments voiced opposition to relocating the entrance at Peninsula SP.
- Of those few who commented on redesigning/redeveloping the Peninsula trail system all were in favor; no one questioned the need for that proposal.
- Horse trails were one of the popular subjects with people feeling strongly in favor and opposed both at Peninsula and Newport.
- The Door County Historical Society and a few others advocated adding authorization to the Peninsula Park plan for the summer kitchen and barn structures to be rebuilt on the Eagle Bluff Lighthouse grounds to restore the historic Light Station site.

Potawatomi State Park

- Maintaining (redeveloping) an observation tower or platform at Potawatomi was the primary comment for this park.

Whitefish Dunes State Park

- A number of people commented on the proposal to add camping here; currently it is only a day-use park, with there being a fairly even split in support and opposition to the change. Also, there were a few advocates proposing separate use-specific snowshoe

trails be designated due to conflicts occurring on the ski trails. And several people gave supporting comments to developing a trail linking the park with Cave Point.

- On April 9, 2018, a citizen resolution was introduced and passed by those in attendance at the Door County Spring Hearing. The resolution was in support of including a boat launch and safe harbor as an option in the master plan at Whitefish Dunes State Park and exploring the feasibility of this project. On May 12, 2018, the full body of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress voted to support this resolution at their annual convention in Green Bay.
- There was a request from at least two individuals at the Sturgeon Bay meeting to include in the plan a feasibility study for a boat launch and safe harbor at Whitefish Dunes State Park. Opposition was also stated against considering any proposal for developing a harbor of refuge at the park. Additionally, several people advocated taking additional action to protect the undeveloped shoreline of the park, such as by designating it as a State Natural Area.

Other comments:

- Several commenters urged increasing mountain bike trails in all the Door County parks.
- Many other comments were also received offering support or opposition or suggesting changes to various more minor plan elements. While these types of comments cannot be readily summarized, they are important and the department is considering them as staff move forward in drafting the final plan for approval by the Natural Resources Board.

Response to comments

Overall the draft regional master plan has strong public support. All the comments were focused on the Door County State Parks and overall, on the primary issues, comments were well-balanced. The following are plan changes that will be made in response to comments or reasons why changes are not recommended:

Peninsula State Park

- Entrance at Peninsula SP: The department clarified the long-term proposal is to construct a new Park Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building at a different location that has yet to be determined; the location of the current PEVS is not being considered as a site for future PEVS construction due to natural resource issues. Given the concern over the proposed language, the department will remove the PEVS bullet from the Long-term Recreation Prescriptions.
- Horse trails: As stated above, there is both strong support and concern over adding horse trails to the park. In the redesign and development effort for the whole park trail system an attempt will be made to include horse trails provided siting requirements can be met. There will be additional opportunities for the public to continue to be involved through that process.
- Eagle Bluff Light Station: The plan will acknowledge that the department will work with partners to continue to educate visitors about the history of Eagle Bluff Lighthouse

through interpretation and education of the lighthouse, site and support facilities. The department may do this cooperatively through an agreement with partner(s) outlining specific management, use and operation of the lighthouse area.

Potawatomi State Park

- Observation tower or platform: The observation tower at Potawatomi State Park is permanently closed. Significant wood decay has been found in the observation tower creating unsafe conditions and requiring removal of the tower. The department is planning for deconstruction of the tower with the intention to remove it as soon as practicable. There are no plans to replace the tower at this time. However, other viewing opportunities at the park include the Old Ski Hill Overlook and pull-offs along Shoreline Road.

Whitefish Dunes State Park

- Camping: Whitefish Dunes State Park is currently a day-use park and does not provide camping opportunities. As a result of the planning process, the department sees an opportunity to accommodate rustic camping, which is underrepresented in Door County. The plan includes language authorizing overnight camping at a small rustic campground to address needs in the region.
- Designated snowshoe trail: The department appreciates demand on the non-motorized recreation system and will continue to accommodate designated uses while striving for a quality experience.
- Boat launch and safe harbor feasibility study: The department is committed to boater safety and supports the need for a feasibility study to identify a location for a safe boat launch ramp on Lake Michigan between Sturgeon Bay and Baileys Harbor. However, at this time the department does not support identifying Whitefish Dunes State Park as the location for this launch until a thorough feasibility study and appropriate approvals are completed. The feasibility study should look at all sites between Sturgeon Bay and Baileys Harbor and include considerations such as the short- and long-term environmental and financial impacts associated with construction and maintenance. It should also consider impacts on existing uses, traffic and safety. The department will take steps outlined in Chapter NR 44, Wis. Admin. Code to notify interested parties of the intent to modify the plan, and seek all necessary approvals to proceed following a completed feasibility study for the preferred location.